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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to present a cross-cultural sampling (the United States and Great Britain) of >50 educators' and psychologists' views regarding the role of parental values and attitudes in the early education of mentally retarded children. Two major implications were discovered: (1) parents can and should be taught specific techniques to enable them to act as educators of their own children; and (2) it would be beneficial to organize a series of committees at local, regional, and national levels composed of one member of each agency serving the mentally handicapped. Respondents also saw a need for parent involvement from the beginning and establishment of parent influence groups. (Author/SBH)

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A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF PROFESSIONAL OPINIONS ON THE ROLE OF PARENTAL VALUES AND ATTITUDES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION OF THE MENTALLY RETARDED IN ENGLAND AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

by

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ABSTRACT

Parental attitude and involvement concerning the education of the young mentally retarded child and the evaluation of his/her progress are vital ingredients in the realization of the child's full developmental potential. Considering that, this study presents a cross-cultural sampling (the United States and Great Britain) of education leaders' views regarding the role of parental values and attitudes in the early education of mentally retarded children.

The study was conducted on-site in America and England by questionnaire and follow-up interviews. The target group consisted of 250 educators and psychologists representing the two nations. Two major implications were discovered: 1) Parents can and should be taught specific techniques to enable them to act as educators of their own children. 2) It would be beneficial to organize a series of committees at local, regional, and national levels composed of one member of each agency serving the mentally handicapped. The responsibilities of these would include developing programs in direct response to established needs of young mentally retarded children.

Respondents also saw a need for parent involvement from the very beginning and establishment of parent influence groups..

Planning together between the parent and teacher helps meet the child's emerging needs and abilities and helps parents become contributors in the educator-parent-child team (Baumgartner & Lynch, 1967).

Regardless of ages or intelligence, all children develop best when they receive proper physical care, training, and stiulation in an atmosphere which meets their emotional needs (Bensberg, 1965).

Generally positive gains have been reported as a result of current research studies assessing the effectiveness of pre-kindergarten intervention programs which base their evaluations on changes in scores on standardized tests of intelligence, reading readiness or language abilities (Deutsch, 1965; Gray & Klaus, 1965; Kohlberg, 1965; Weikart, 1967; Boehm, 1971).

Calvert (1971) feels it is important to include family involvement as a planned, purposeful part of an early education program. Parents should be involved in their child's education through (a) learning, (b) working, (c) planning and policy-making, (d) disseminating information about the program, (e) assisting in administering the total program, and (f) evaluating the program. He feels the family should be participating in order that they might help themselves help the program and help the handicapped child. He also feels that active family participation in early education programs might well have a lasting effect on the education programs the handicapped child will encounter later.

Cianci (1951) reported that when a child is accepted by his parents, the teachers can guide the parents in teaching their child (Cruickshank & Johnson, 1958).

A mentally retarded child has all of a normal child's troubles and joys (Egg, 1969).

One study found that parents greatly appreciated nursery school for their retarded child because of the advantages to the child and because they were given the opportunity to discuss their problems with other parents of retarded children and with professionals (Ehlers, 1966).

Erikson (1965) feels that encouragement of growth and provision of learning opportunities during the time of infancy to six years determines to a large degree the fulfillment of the potential of an individual.

The public schools in Ypsilanti, Michigan, have established home programs in conjunction with their preschool programs in an effort to develop a more positive parent attitude, develop a closer home - school relationship, foster the education of the child on a more intensive basis, and to involve the mother in the education process. The results after a year of operation showed an increase in the intelligence scores of the group as well as improved speech and language, interest in books, display of curiosity, creativity with art materials, and greater ability to concentrate on a task (Erikson, 1965).

Kirk (1961) concluded that the preschool has a positive effect in increasing the rate of growth of mentally retarded children (Erikson, 1965).

French and Scott (1960) found that the best job of educating a retarded child can be done when parent and teacher work as a team. Parents can best help their child learn by using the same methods as the school, for a retarded child learns best through repetition. A parent can also help by watching for any opportunity a child may have to practice a simple skill in the home.

For teachers and others to do the best they can for the retarded child, it is also necessary for parents to learn to give objective reports

of their children's progress. If parents take an active interest in their child's schooling, it will help the child, for his strongest motive for learning is parental approval.

It is only if the retarded child can find in his own home love, acceptance, security, routine, discipline, and reinforcement of academic skills that he will achieve his full potential.

Bruner found that the lack of sensory stiumlation during the early years seriously affects the educational development of a child (Frost, 1966).

Scott's (1962) data indicated that early childhook is a time of maximum plasticity and accessibility to training and learning (Frost, 1966).

Frost (1966) feels that parents must be able to reinforce their child's achievements if he is to develop a constructive relationship between his intellectual and psychomotor behavior.

Milner (1951) in Frost's The Disadvantaged Child (1966) concluded that children whose mealtimes are a time of total family interaction score higher in verbal ability and reading skills than children who are not allowed to talk at mealtime.

Frost (1966) feels it is important that a child be a participant in the language interaction in the home and receive a certain degree of individual attention and reinforcement.

Martin (1960) in Frost's The Disadvantaged Child (1966) feels a child must be reached at as early age as possible if he is to be a contributor to society.

Crandall, Preston, and Robson (1958) in Frost's The Disadvantaged Child argue that if a child is to value achievement activities as potential sources of satisfaction and security, he must have some parental reinforcement of achievements.

Frost (1966) found that the most crucial aspect of the social environment contributing to a child's achievement behavior is in the interaction with his parents.

Frost (1966) feels family life and love are important to the healthy development of the individual physically and spiritually and are basic to a child's happiness. Therefore, family life should serve as a complement to it, not a replacement.

Bing (1963) in Frost's Early Childhood Education Rediscovered (1968) concluded that children with higher verbal ability are those whose parents provided more verbal stimulation in early childhood, provided storybooks for the child, were critical of poor academic achievement, read to them, provided assistance sooner when requested, and pressured their child more for improvements.

Based on the data of Dave (1963) and Wolf (1964), Frost (1968) concluded that children of high intellectual ability have parents whose interest in their intellectual development is shown by pressure to succeed and assistance in doing so.

The President's Committee on Mental Retardation Report of 1968 stated that the range of an individual's intelligence is set in earliest childhood and can therefore be blunted by a harsh, limiting, negative environment (Garton, 1970).

The Early Education Act (USA) provides for:

> '...the development and carrying out...of experimental preschool and early education programs for handicapped children which...show promise of promoting a comprehensive and strengthened approach to the special problems of such children.' The Act called for the support of 75 to 100 demonstration projects over a three-year period. Programs are intended to stimulate all areas of the

handicapped child's development--emotional, physical, intellectual and social. The Act also calls for parent participation, for acquainting the community with the problems and potentials of handicapped youngsters, and for coordinating each program with the local school system in the community being served. The program represents a breakthrough in providing preschool children their first chance to keep up with children who do not have handicaps. Special education experts believe that more than 50 percent of handicapped youngsters can have their condition alleviated or sometimes cured if medical and special educational services can be provided during the earliest formative period when children are most responsive to treatment. (Classman, 1971)

Nursery schools can be used to determine what kind of schooling will be best for the retarded child in later life and can provide early treatment which can perhaps minimize the handicap and precent secondary physical or psychological problems in the future. Early assessment also helps parents know how they can best help their child (Gulliford, 1971).

In Ribble's (1943) studies she found that children deprived of "mothering" lagged far behind in psychological and physical development (Hutt & Gibby, 1965).

Parents significantly influence the personality development of the retarded child (Hutt & Gibby, 1965).

In England, nursery schooling is offered to a handicapped child at an early age because it is now realized what far-reaching effects it can have on the child's later development (Jackson, 1969).

Jordan (1966) found that early training and the way in which a retarded child is reared determine his later effectiveness just as they do that of a normal child.

Centerwall and Centerwall (1960) in Jordan's The Mentally Retarded (1966) concluded that growing up in a family circle produces optimal growth in the intelligence and social quotients of the retarded child.

Kirk's (1958) research demonstrated that early treatment is vital if children are to reach their potentials for growth and achievement (Jordan, 1971).

PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to inquire into and to discuss the attitudes and opinions of American and British professionals in the field of early childhood education of the mentally retarded, specifically around the issue of parental involvement and participation in their retarded child's education. Few parents are prepared psychologically or financially to shoulder the enormous burden of care and treatment for a mentally retarded child. Because of fears and frustrations surrounding the presence of a mentally retarded child, parents often fail in accepting, understanding and in working with this child. Thus there is a need to discover the most effective ways of helping parents deal with their retarded child, particularly during the preschool years.

Modern theories of education seem to indicate that the home environment and the parental attitudes seem to be important integrating forces in the schooling of a child; therefore, the three important factors of concern in this study are the parents, the child, and the preschool educational experience and their specific roles and functions in society. The role of the parents is to provide for the physical, emotional and intellecutal needs of their child so that he might achieve maximum growth and development. The role of the child is to learn the modes of behavior and the skills and techniques of adaptation, as well as the tradition and culture of his group. The role of the preschool educational experience is to help influence the growth and development of the child so that he might realize his capabilities and achieve the maximum adjustment possible.

The parents, the child, and the preschool education experience have roles to perform independent of each other and yet every action one takes

affects the other two. For example, the parents' attitude toward their child will affect the child's behavior in the school while the treatment the child receives in school may affect his behavior at home, which in turn affects the parents' attitude toward the child.

It is important to realize some of the factors which have major effects on this inter-relationship. First, in considering the relationship between the parent and the child, it must be realized that variables such as cultural differences and social class have important effects. More flexible parents are better able to relate to the problems of their retarded child, while others have difficulty relating to any of the problems of their retarded child. Members of lower social classes may not be able to understand what is required of them and of their child in facing the problems of retardation. Members of the upper social classes may tend to rely on family resources and institutionalization and fail to emphasize the development of the child's inner resources.

Another important factor is the emotional state of the parents. There are parents who are ambivalent in their own self-concept or who suffer from other emotional disorders and as a result are too absorbed in their own emotional difficulties to be available to their children, let alone to try to form any relationship with the school. These parents are not ready or able to undertake any demands from the school for further action. These parents might very easily block a child's potential because they project their difficulties on him, tending to use him as a resource for themselves rather than being a resource for him.

Parents who are too involved and preoccupied with their work also can cause irreparable damage in the establishment of the sort of relationship between the parent and the child which might help the child achieve his fu[illegible]t potential.

Each of the above factors has a very important effect on the parent-child relationship which will affect the child's whole life in school and his future achievements.

Second, in the consideration of the relationship between the preschool and the child, some important factors are the child's intellectual ability as indicated by intelligence and achievement tests, the child's emotional maturity, and the child's abilities in self-help skills. The way in which the preschool deals with each of these factors has a great deal to do with the child's future achievements in school. It is the job of the preschool to provide a stimulating atmosphere which can challenge the intellect of the retarded child and prepare him for the elementary school he will be attending. A preschool must also attempt to prevent anti-social behavior before it becomes an established pattern and stop unacceptable behavior while it is still early enough to instill correct social behavior in its place. Through patient, understanding teaching, the preschool must also attempt to help each child achieve the maximum amount of independence of which he is capable. If a preschool fails to meet any of the challenges of the retarded child, it may prevent the child from achieving to his fullest potential in later years of schooling.

Third, the relationship between the preschool and the parents has several factors which must be considered. First, it must be determined how the school attempts to communciate ideas and approaches to the parents which would enable them to become a resource to their child. It was found that, in many instances, parents tended to be stereotyped rather than individualized by the school. The school often fails to realize the variations among parents and, as a result, treats all parents with rigidity and criticism. Parents who encountere this type

of treatment may lack a clear concept of the school itself and the school's expectations of them (Frankenstein, 1962). When this situation occurs, the school fails to understand and meet the needs of the child who is very much influenced by these parents.

Another problem seems to arise with parents who are not well-educated. The school often fails to encourage these parents to take advantage of the school's resources for their own improvement, as well as the improvement of their child as they learn to understand the role of the school in their child's education.

One of the biggest problems in parent-school relations, however, is the lack of established pathways along which the parents can cooperate with the school to provide information about the child and his behavior at home and about the home environment in general. Schools of the past often did not bother to create opportunities for overcoming the lack of participation and cooperation on the part of the parents, and thus, parents, to a great extent, did not participate in school activities or share information with the school. If such cooperative relationships were established, understanding of the child and the entire school community would certainly be increased.

This study will attempt to explore further inter-relationships between the parent, the child, and the preschool educational experience to determine the advantages to the retarded when parents and preschool teachers work together.

SUBJECTS

This study is limited to opinions of 65 leaders in the field of special education in England and America. It is further limited to include only the aspect of parental values and involvement in the early childhood education of the mentally retarded.

METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

The study was conducted in America and in England. The author spent one year on a fellowship in England. The subjects used in the study were the first 125 members to appear in the 1973 British Psychological Society Membership List. The other sample was 125 members of the 1973 American Association of Mental Deficiency. These 250 individuals received a mailed survey of 20 hypothetical problems concerned with the education of the young mentally retarded. The respondents were asked to rank the 20 problems from one to 20 with one being the most important. When this part of the survey was completed, each respondent was asked to state solutions to the 10 problems he/she chose to be the most important.

Included with the survey was a cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey. The letters asked that the surveys be returned on August 1, 1973, in the United States; December 1, 1973, in England, in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. A follow-up of a personal appointment with each individual was planned when possible.

The problem areas were selected from a review of the literature and a review and approval by a university faculty committee. From these results, opinions were solicited from the respondents as to the pertinent problems in early childhood education of the mentally

retarded. From this information, warrantable conclusions were drawn.

The questionnaire used in the study provided the investigator with samples which represented the two cultures. The two groups together contained a sample of 250 persons. However, only 20 replied to the questionnaire in England and 45 replied in America.

The data from the two groups were analyzed. The Kendall Concordance was applied to test for agreement. When the two groups were found to be in significant agreement, then the Spearman coefficient of correlation was applied. The Spearman was used as a measure of association which requires that both variables be measured on at least an ordinal scale so that the objects or individuals under study could be ranked. The study showed that there was significant agreement between the English and American data.

From the English data a W was found at .19 with p - .0001. There was agreement within the English respondents. From the American data a W of .18 was indicated with p = .0001. There was agreement within the American respondents. There is homogeneity and there is significant agreement within each group. Then the Spearman rank correlation was applied to see if there was agreement between the groups resulting in r =.9455 which falls beyond the .01 level of significance (which is .534) and the null hypothesis is rejected, e.g., evidence shows that the leaders of the two nations do not differ significantly in their opinion of what problems seem to be of prime importance to parents concerning the early childhood education of their mentally retarded offspring.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions

The author in review of the literature has chosen 20 problems which seem to be of prime concern. As a leader in the field, please rank them according to the importance to you. Rank them one to 20. List number one as being the most important to 20, the least important.

Rank

( ) 1. Many mental retardation programs suffer from lack of public awareness and acceptance. In order to educate the child or children properly, the public needs to be informed. At present there isn't ample staff or economic need.

( ) 2. There is a lack of communication between agencies in order to exchange ideas and services.

( ) 3. Service clubs have been generous to programs, but frequently this support is specifically directed at tangible acquisitions and money is needed to pay salaries.

( ) 4. Many children are unable to attend programs as their families can't afford the tuition fee. For children living under so many disadvantages, one would like to see society's concern become great enough that it would extend free schooling to them.

( ) 5. Many children are unable to attend programs, as they do not have transportation there and back.

( ) 6. There is a need to expand services or to combine with other agencies, but economically this is not feasible.

( ) 7. Many children are escorted by older brothers and sisters and the centers have no contact with tne parents after the initial interviews.

( ) 8. Many parents admit they are not interested in discussing the goals of the program or programs of the child.

( ) 9. Of prime importance is participation in parent meetings or special activities, but it is always the same parents who volunteer to participate.

( ) 10. Some parents only want a place for their child and no other involvement. If these parents would become involved, it would seem that not only would they benefit, and their children reap the benefits, but they themselves would have a greater understanding of child care and development and home management.

( ) 11. Traditional ways of motivation have not worked to motivate interest. There are problems of getting sitters for parents when they have to attend meetings.

( ) 12. Parents of many of the children have difficulty of "opening" themselves to others and discussing their problem.

( ) 13. We have to find ways to make it, first of all, materially worthwhile, e.g., paying parents for training and providing supervision for their children while they attend. This incentive agencies can't afford at this time.

( ) 14. When parents are employed (as many of them are), there isn't energy and time to go home, take care of family, and return for a meeting.

( ) 15. If parents are not employed, mothers might become involved in learning about children's skills and behavior if they were paid a minimum stipend to be "aides" several mornings a week for a certain length of time. The people who need this aid are many times taxed physically, mentally and emotionally just to keep alive.

( ) 16. Volunteers are a great asset to programs. However, many neighborhoods are getting hazardous and it is difficult to secure volunteers.

( ) 17. We discover that with children with real physical or mental problems, it is almost impossible to get follow-through treatment and help for them.

( ) 18. There does seem to be a high proportion of families with mental dificiencies of one sort or another. Again, parents are not mobile and have no resources even to transport children for special care. Volunteers to pick up and transport consistently would not come into "bad" areas. We need to utilize the people of the areas in need, but many do not have cars and many are wary of one's involvement.

( ) 19. Because people in need are often involved with numbers of welfare agencies and social workers, the slightest attempt at more contact on the preschool programs is neglected, even sometimes to the point of withdrawing the child from the program if it looks like we want to talk with a parent.

( ) 20. Sometimes with the values and standards of the agency which may differ from the homemaker, it is more difficult to attain a rapport with clients and may make for confusions in the child's life. Cultural patterns and understandings are hard to miss when factors of poverty, suspicion, and discouragement with life are too predominant.

Instructions

Now that you have completed the ranking procedure, please write down solutions or suggestions to the 10 most important you selected.

RAW DATA RANKINGS OF 20 QUESTIONNAIRE PROBLEMS

By ENGLISH RESPONDENTS

Questionnaire Problems

Respondents	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1	1	4	10	18	11	16	3	7	5	2	12	6	7	14	15	19	8	20	13	9
2	1	2	7	20	19	5	8	4	6	3	11	9	16	10	18	17	12	13	14	15
3	2	3	10	19	18	6	8	4	5	7	12	9	17	14	10	13	1	16	11	15
4	5	12	16	18	17	7	6	11	1	2	8	3	20	13	9	4	14	15	19	10
5	9	4	20	1	3	5	3	6	4	10	17	7	18	19	15	16	2	11	8	12
6	15	16	17	1	18	20	4	5	2	3	19	6	7	10	8	9	11	14	12	13
7	1	6	16	18	17	7	9	3	2	4	10	5	19	11	20	12	8	15	13	14
8	11	10	20	1	9	8	7	12	13	5	6	14	15	16	17	19	18	2	3	4
9	11	15	7	10	8	6	16	12	13	9	14	17	15	4	2	18	3	1	20	19
10	1	6	13	2	3	12	4	16	7	15	8	14	9	10	11	19	5	17	20	18
11	18	19	20	8	9	14	13	17	12	11	10	2	1	3	4	15	16	5	7	6
12	6	1	15	16	17	2	18	10	7	4	11	5	19	8	20	14	3	12	9	13
13	1	4	19	20	17	2	18	5	3	6	7	8	16	15	14	9	10	11	13	12
14	1	12	13	20	14	15	16	2	3	4	17	5	6	7	8	18	10	9	19	11
15	2	6	11	1	7	12	15	13	19	8	14	3	18	20	10	9	5	4	16	17
16	6	7	12	1	2	13	17	16	14	3	15	4	5	19	18	20	9	8	11	10
17	6	9	7	13	12	20	19	2	1	5	18	4	11	3	17	10	16	14	15	8
18	16	17	18	1	5	14	15	3	4	2	13	9	20	6	8	7	10	12	11	19
19	1	2	12	3	4	7	15	16	8	13	5	9	17	18	14	11	6	10	19	20
20	3	13	7	1	9	8	19	4	5	6	20	18	10	11	12	15	2	14	17	16

RAW DATA RANKINGS OF 20 QUESTIONNAIRE PROBLEMS

By AMERICAN RESPONDENTS

Questionnaire Problems

Respondents	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1	11	10	18	12	14	9	17	15	2	1	3	4	16	6	20	19	8	5	13	7
2	7	6	13	4	7	11	20	17	12	16	10	3	15	19	9	8	2	5	18	19
3	5	17	15	16	17	13	18	20	6	19	7	12	8	9	2	10	4	3	11	1
4	10	12	11	13	14	19	18	9	2	1	8	3	20	7	17	6	4	16	5	15
5	5	1	15	6	8	7	18	10	4	11	19	3	9	12	2	13	2	17	16	20
6	1	11	17	5	6	10	16	18	8	12	15	7	2	4	3	9	13	14	19	20
7	6	17	20	5	9	18	15	4	14	3	19	7	16	13	8	12	10	2	11	1
8	1	3	18	2	12	4	11	11	10	14	13	9	20	17	19	14	8	7	6	5
9	9	7	19	3	18	4	13	10	14	5	12	6	20	15	8	17	1	16	2	11
10	8	15	14	9	11	10	12	13	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	19	18	17	16	20
11	6	15	18	1	8	13	9	3	10	11	19	12	16	20	4	7	2	5	17	14
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15	1	4	20	5	11	6	16	7	12	8	13	10	18	15	19	17	2	14	9	3
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24	5	7	8	9	10	11	4	3	2	1	12	6	14	13	15	20	19	17	15	16

20

RAW DATA RANKINGS OF 20 QUESTIONNAIRE PROBLEMS

By AMERICAN RESPONDENTS
(continued)

Questionnaire Problems

Respondents	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
25	1	5	4	2	10	3	7	11	9	6	8	12	15	16	14	13	18	19	20	17
26	1	2	18	6	19	16	17	7	12	3	13	8	20	11	14	9	15	10	4	5
27	10	3	12	8	5	6	15	18	11	7	9	14	2	16	4	17	19	20	13	1
28	2	1	3	16	15	17	18	8	5	4	9	6	19	7	10	13	11	14	20	12
29	5	10	20	1	2	13	7	16	4	3	15	17	19	9	14	18	8	11	6	12
30	3	2	18	4	1	13	16	15	8	6	17	7	19	14	20	9	5	11	10	12
31	7	1	11	17	18	4	6	2	5	3	12	8	19	9	18	20	13	14	15	16
32	12	17	18	14	16	20	3	4	1	2	7	6	19	5	13	11	10	15	8	9
33	5	1	3	1	1	1	15	15	10	10	10	2	5	5	1	15	10	10	20	15
35	20	2	4	1	3	5	19	18	17	16	15	10	13	12	14	11	6	9	7	8
36	10	3	4	8	9	4	15	5	12	14	13	6	19	16	17	18	1	20	7	2
37	1	5	20	15	14	4	2	6	11	3	19	7	9	8	18	17	10	16	12	13
38	8	7	12	18	17	11	1	19	4	20	9	10	16	5	15	6	2	3	13	14
39	13	9	20	18	8	14	10	19	15	1	2	4	3	17	11	16	12	7	6	5
40	7	20	11	6	10	12	19	4	18	1	17	5	15	14	13	16	3	8	2	9
41	1	3	18	4	5	10	8	9	11	2	7	12	13	14	15	16	17	6	19	20
42	7	12	13	8	11	19	16	15	4	6	5	3	20	2	14	18	17	9	10	1
43	16	3	20	17	2	18	19	4	5	6	7	12	13	15	11	14	1	8	9	10
44	2	3	17	1	5	4	19	10	11	8	9	18	20	7	14	12	6	13	15	16
45	4	5	13	7	17	8	16	10	3	2	15	1	18	9	12	19	6	20	14	11

TABLE FOR

SPEARMAN RANK CORRELATION COEFFICIENT

Problem	Average Rank American	Average Rank English	d_1	d_2
1	2	1	1	1
2	4	5	-1	1
3	20	17.5	2.5	6.25
4	6	8	-2	4
5	9	10	-1	1
6	8	9	-1	1
7	16	13	3	9
8	11	7	4	16
9	5	3	2	4
10	1	2	-1	1
11	12	14	-2	4
12	3	4	-1	1
13	18	19	-1	1
14	10	12	-2	4
15	13	15	-2	1
16	19	20	-1	1
17	7	6	1	1
18	14	11	3	9
19	15	17.5	-2.5	6.25
20	17	16	1	1

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Parent input in approach to education and success of the young mentally retarded child and in evaluating his or her progress are vital ingredients of the latter's development. This study was a survey of leaders' opinions in England and America concerning parent involvement in early childhood education of the mentally retarded.

An extensive review of the literature revealed that there was no existing research which compared the opinions of leaders in America and England concerning parent involvement in early childhood education of the mentally retarded.

Two hundred and fifty educators and psychologists were used as the sample for this particular study. One hundred and twenty-five of these educators were members of the 1973 British Psychological Membership List and the other 125 were members of the American Association of Mental Deficiency. The initial procedure of the study was to mail out 250 questionnaires. These questionnaires were mailed in the United States of America and in England. However, only 65 were returned -- 45 American and 20 English.

The results of this study suggest the following implications:

First, parents can and thus should be taught specific techniques such as behavior modification so that they can act as educators for their own children. Parental involvement is important, not only for that particular child but for the parent to better understand the needs of that child. Teachers should begin training programs for the parents as soon as possible.

Second, it would be beneficial to organize a series of committees at local, regional, and national levels composed of one member of each

agency serving the mentally handicapped. This committee would be responsible for establishing the needs of young mentally retarded children as well as developing programs to fill these needs.

The majority of the respondents saw and realized the importance of parent involvement from the very beginning. Therefore, a strong thrust should be made to get experienced people to speak to the parents. Shy parents and those parents who have difficulty in communicating can benefit from such a program because they will not be placed in the limelight. Also, parent groups should be established where the parents have the opportunity to voice their views if they so desire.

What is taught and how it is applied to the child is important to consider for any child and especially a child that expresses difficulty in learning. Therefore, the open framework program, the child-centered approach, and programmed techniques are all methods which should be considered for the young mentally retarded.

The open framework type of program focuses on underlying cognitive processes. The child, guided by the teachers, learns through direct experience. It is important and this study recommends that the teacher create and organize a program which maintains an environment for a child where the child can learn and develop his abilities. The aim of a child-centered program is the development of the whole child with particular emphasis on social adjustment, emotional growth, and independence in learning. Programmed learning is beneficial in that it is rigidly structured, and learning does take place through repetition and drill. This study shows the respondents feel specific procedures and materials are necessary for the child if the child is to learn and progress.

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